

In the matter of eliminating the Amateur Radio Morse Code Requirement:

Morse Code was invented about 170 years ago and has served its purpose. In today's technological age of digital communications, it is of limited use.

I feel that many people do not have an aptitude for mastering Morse Code any more than they have the aptitude to become a concert pianist.

My feelings are best explained from my own experience.

I started trying to learn the Morse Code in about 1948. By 1953, I managed to get to 5wpm and got my novice license, WN3WVD. Using my electronic skills, I had managed to construct a working eight-tube receiver and a 75-Watt transmitter. However, I never made a successful CW contact. I even had help from a famous ham who happened to be my High-school geometry teacher, the late Jesse Bieberman, W3KT.

In 1956, I obtained my commercial First-Class Radiotelephone Operator's License. At about that time, I also passed the 5wpm test and obtained an Amateur Radio Technician license: K6GQR. I became employed as a broadcast engineer at a Los Angeles television station, KTLA. Therefore, I had the technical skills to become a General Class operator, and although I continued to study the code, I could never get to 13wpm.

I was frustrated for many years until I discovered some new and better practice materials and managed to pass my Advanced test at 13wpm in 1987, nearly 40 years after I started. I became KI6YE. I studied and studied and a year later, I passed my 20wpm Extra test. However, to this day, I have never made a successful CW contact.

I feel that learning and using Morse Code is a right-brain activity, while the technical aspects of Amateur radio are largely left-brain activities. Psychologists tell us that some people are more oriented to one side of the brain. I have to analytically (left-brain) take Morse characters apart in my head to decipher them. I do not hear them as single sounds. In fact, I have to count the dits and dahs, particularly in the numeral characters.

Music is another good example of a right brain activity. Despite recently taking a college "Fundamentals of Music" class, I still do not hear the beat in music and cannot dance. I go back to my original point: It is a matter of aptitude! I envy those who have such aptitudes.

Look at photos of any gathering of Amateur radio operators: Those pictured are almost always older men. We need interested young people to keep Amateur radio alive. I doubt that many of them are interested in Samuel Morse's circa 1835 code.

Once again, Amateur Radio proved its value during the recent hurricanes. When we have similar natural disasters in 20-30 years, will there be enough Amateur operators around to answer the call?

My inability to learn Morse Code effectively kept me out of Amateur Radio for about 40 years. Again, even when I got my licenses, I could never use CW. In fact, I do not own a key.

Signed,

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